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Mrs. Greenhow
By W. G. Beymer

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Mrs. Greenhow

By

William Gilmore Beymer

Drowned on the N.C. Coast and buried in Wilmington.

Harpers
March, 1914

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Mrs. Greenhow*

BY WILLIAM GILMORE BEYMER

THESE pages record the story of the woman who cast a pebble into the sea of circumstance—a pebble from whose widening ripples there rose a mighty wave, on whose crest the Confederate States of America were borne through four years of civil war.

Rose O'Neal Greenhow gave to General Beauregard information which enabled him to concentrate the widely scattered Confederate forces in time to meet McDowell on the field of Manassas, and there, with General Johnson, to win for the South the all-important battle of Bull Run.

Mrs. Greenhow's cipher despatch—nine words on a scrap of paper—set in motion the reinforcements which arrived at the height of the battle and turned it against the North. But for the part she played in the Confederate victory Rose O'Neal Greenhow paid a heavy price.

During the Buchanan administration Mrs. Greenhow was one of the leaders of Washington society. She was a Southerner by birth, but a resident of Washington from her girlhood; a widow, beautiful, accomplished, wealthy, and noted for her wit and her forceful personality. Her home was the rendezvous of those prominent in official life in Washington — the "court circle," had America been a monarchy. She was personally acquainted with all the leading men of the country, many of whom had partaken of her hospitality. President Buchanan was a close personal friend; a friend, too, was William H. Seward, then Senator from New York; her niece, a granddaughter of Dolly Madison, was the wife of Stephen A. Douglas. It was in such company that she watched with burning interest the war clouds grow and darken over Charleston Harbor, then burst into the four years' storm; she never saw it end.

Among her guests at this time was Colonel Thomas Jordan, who, before leaving Washington to accept the appointment of Adjutant-General of the Confederate army at Manassas, broached to Mrs. Greenhow the subject of a secret military correspondence. What would *she* do to aid the Confederacy? he asked her. Ah, what would she not do! Then he told her how some one in Washington was needed by the South; of the importance of the work which might be done, and her own especial fitness for the task. And that night before he left the house he gave her a cipher code, and arranged that her despatches to him were to be addressed to "Thomas John Rayford."

And so he crossed the river into Virginia and left her, in the Federal capital, armed with the glittering shield, "Justified by military necessity," and the two-edged sword, "All's fair in love and war"; —left her, his agent, to gather in her own way information from the enemy, her former friends, where and from whom she would.

It was in April, '61, that she took up her work; in November, Allan Pinkerton, head of the Federal Secret Service, made to the War Department a report in which he said—in the vehement language of a partisanship as intense as Mrs. Greenhow's own:

> It was a fact too notorious to need reciting here, that for months . . . Mrs. Greenhow was actively and to a great extent openly engaged in giving aid and comfort, sympathy and information; . . . her house was the rendezvous for the most violent enemies of the government, . . . where they were furnished with every possible information to be obtained by the untiring energies of this very remarkable woman; . . . that since the commencement of this rebellion this woman, from her long residence at the

* To Mrs. Richard Price, Recording Secretary of Cape Fear Chapter Three, United Daughters of the Confederacy, at Wilmington, North Carolina, acknowledgment is made for her courtesy in permitting the use of data relating to Mrs. Greenhow.

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capital, her superior education, her uncommon social powers, her very extensive acquaintance among, and her active association with, the leading politicians of this nation, has possessed an almost superhuman power, all of which she has most wickedly used to destroy the government. . . . She has made use of whoever and whatever she could as mediums to carry into effect her unholy purposes. . . . She has not used her powers in vain among the officers of the army, not a few of whom she has robbed of patriotic hearts and transformed them into sympathizers with the enemies of the country. . . . She had her secret and insidious agents in all parts of this city and scattered over a large extent of country. . . . She had alphabets, numbers, ciphers, and various other not mentioned ways of holding intercourse. . . . Statistical facts were thus obtained and forwarded that could have been found nowhere but in the national archives, thus leading me to the conclusion that such evidence must have been obtained from employees and agents in the various departments of the government.

Thus she worked throughout the opening days of the war. Washington lay ringed about with camps of new-formed regiments, drilling feverishly. Already the press and public had raised the cry, "On to Richmond." When would they start? Where would they first strike? It was on those two points that the Confederate plan of campaign hinged. It was Mrs. Greenhow who gave the information. To General Beauregard at Manassas, where he anxiously awaited tidings of the Federal advance, there came about the 10th of July the first message from Mrs. Greenhow. The message told of the intended advance of the enemy across the Potomac and on to Manassas via Fairfax Court-house and Centreville. It was brought into the Confederate lines by a young lady of Washington, Miss Duval, who, disguised as a market-girl, carried the message to a house near Fairfax Court-house, occupied by the wife and daughters (Southern born) of an officer in the Federal army. General Beauregard at once commenced his preparations for receiving the attack, and sent one of his aides to President Davis to communicate the information and to urge the immediate concentration of the scattered Confederate forces.

But still the Federal start was delayed, and the precise date was as indefinite as ever. It was during this period of uncertainty that G. Donellan, who, before joining the Confederates, had been a clerk in the Department of the Interior, volunteered to return to Washington for information. He was armed with the two words "Trust Bearer" in Colonel Jordan's cipher, and was sent across the Potomac with instructions to report to Mrs. Greenhow. He arrived at the very moment that she most needed a messenger. Hastily writing in cipher her all-important despatch, "Order issued for McDowell to move on Manassas to-night," she gave it to Donellan, who was taken by her agents in a buggy, with relays of horses, down the eastern shore of the Potomac to a ferry near Dumfries, where he was ferried across. Cavalry couriers delivered the despatch into General Beauregard's hands that night, July 16th.

And the source of Mrs. Greenhow's information? She has made the statement that she *"received a copy of the order to McDowell."* Allan Pinkerton was not wrong when he said that she "had not used her powers in vain among the officers of the army."

At midday of the 17th there came Colonel Jordan's reply:

> Yours was received at eight o'clock at night. Let them come; we are ready for them. We rely upon you for precise information. Be particular as to description and destination of forces, quantity of artillery, etc.

She was ready with fresh information, and the messenger was sent back with the news that the Federals intended to cut the Manassas Gap Railroad to prevent Johnson, at Winchester, from reinforcing Beauregard. After that there was nothing to be done but await the result of the inevitable battle. She had done her best. What that best was worth she learned when she received from Colonel Jordan the treasured message:

> Our President and our General direct me to thank you. We rely upon you for further information. The Confederacy owes you a debt.

When the details of the battle became known, and she learned how the last of Johnson's 8,500 men (marched to Gen-

eral Beauregard's aid because of *her* despatches) had arrived at three o'clock on the day of the battle and had turned the wavering Federal army into a mob of panic-stricken fugitives, she felt that the "Confederacy owed her a debt," indeed.

In the days immediately following Bull Run it seemed to the Confederate sympathizers in the city that their victorious army had only to march into Washington to take it. "Everything about the national Capitol betokened the panic of the Administration," Mrs. Greenhow wrote. "Preparations were made for the expected attack, and signals were arranged to give the alarm. . . . I went round with the principal officer in charge of this duty, and took advantage of the situation. . . . Our gallant Beauregard would have found himself right ably seconded by the rebels in Washington had he deemed it expedient to advance on the city. A part of the plan was to have cut the telegraph wires connecting with the various military positions with the War Department, to make prisoners of McClellan and several others, thereby creating still greater confusion in the first moments of panic. Measures had also been taken to spike the guns in Fort Corcoran, Fort Ellsworth, and other important points, accurate drawings of which had been furnished to our commanding officer by me." Doubtless it was these same drawings concerning which the New York *Herald* commented editorially a month later:

MRS. GREENHOW AND HER DAUGHTER
From a War-time Photograph

. . . We have in this little matter [Mrs. Greenhow's arrest] a clue to the mystery of those important government maps and plans which the rebels lately left behind them in their hasty flight from Fairfax Courthouse, . . . and we are at liberty to guess how Beauregard was so minutely informed of this advance, and of our plan of attack on his lines, as to be ready to meet it at every salient point with overwhelming numbers.

Poor Mrs. Greenhow—from the very first doomed to disaster. Her maps and plans (if these, indeed, were hers) were allowed to fall into the enemy's hands; despatches were sent to her by an ill-chosen messenger, who, too late, was discovered to be a sp- for the Federal War Department; her very cipher code, given her by Colonel Jordan, proved to be an amateurish affair that was readily deciphered by the Federal War Office. She never had a chance to escape detection. Concerning the cipher, Colonel Jordan wrote to Confederate Secretary of War Judah P. Benjamin, October, '61 (the letter was found in the archives of Richmond four years later): "This cipher I arranged last April. Being my first attempt and hastily devised it may be deciphered by any expert, as I found after use of it for a time. . . . That does not matter as of course I used it with but the lady, and with her it has served our purpose. . . ." It had, indeed, served their purpose, but in serving it had brought imprisonment and ruin to the woman.

When the War Department began to shake itself free from the staggering burden placed upon it by the rout at Bull Run, almost its first step was to seek out the source of the steady and swift-flowing stream of information to

Richmond. Suspicion at once fell upon Mrs. Greenhow. Many expressed their secession sentiments as openly as did she, but there was none other who possessed her opportunities for obtaining Federal secrets. Federal officers and officials continued their pleasant social relations with her, and she was believed by the War Office to be influencing some of these. Thomas A. Scott, Assistant Secretary of War, sent for Allan Pinkerton and instructed him to place Mrs. Greenhow under surveillance; her house was to be constantly watched, as well as all visitors from the moment they were seen to enter or to leave it, and, should any of these visitors later attempt to go South, they were immediately to be arrested. The watch on the house continued for some days; many prominent gentlemen called —men whose loyalty was above question. Then on the night of August 22d, while Pinkerton and several of his men watched during a hard storm, an officer of the Federal army entered the house. Pinkerton removed his shoes and stood on the shoulders of one of his men that he might watch and listen at a crack in the shutters. When the officer left the house he was followed by Pinkerton (still in his stocking feet) and one of his detectives. Turning suddenly, the officer discovered that he was being followed; he broke into a run, and the three of them raced through the deserted, rain-swept streets straight to the door of a station of the Provost-Marshal. The pursued had maintained his lead and reached the station first; he was its commanding officer, and instantly turned out the guard. Allan Pinkerton and his agent suddenly found that the quarry had bagged the hunters.

The angry officer refused to send word for them to Secretary Scott, to General McClellan, to the Provost-Marshal—to any one! He clapped them into the guard-house—"a most filthy and uncomfortable place"—and left them there, wet and bedraggled, among the crowd of drunken soldiers and common prisoners of the streets. In the morning, when the guard was relieved, one of them, whom Pinkerton had bribed, carried a message to Secretary Scott, by whom they were at once set free. In his report Allan Pinkerton says:

> . . . The officer then [immediately after Pinkerton was put under arrest] went up-stairs while I halted and looked at my watch. Said officer returned in twenty minutes with a revolver in his hand, saying that he went up-stairs on purpose to get the revolver. The inquiry arises, was it for that purpose he stayed thus, or for the more probable one of hiding or destroying the evidence of his guilt obtained of Mrs. Greenhow or furnished to her? . . .

This report goes no further into the charge, but that very day, August 23d, within a few hours of his release, Allan Pinkerton placed Mrs. Greenhow under arrest as a spy.

Of the events of that fateful Friday Mrs. Greenhow has left a graphic record, complete save that it does not tell why such events need ever have been, for she had been warned of her proposed arrest—warned in ample time at least to have attempted an escape. The message which told of the impending blow had been sent to her, Mrs. Greenhow tells, by a lady in Georgetown, to whom one of General McClellan's aides had given the information. The note said also that the Hon. William Preston, Minister to Spain until the outbreak of the war, was likewise to be arrested. To him Mrs. Greenhow passed on the warning, and he safely reached the Confederate army. But Mrs. Greenhow — why did she stay? Did escape seem so improbable that she dared not run the risk of indubitably convicting herself by an attempted flight? Did she underestimate the gravity of her situation and depend upon "influence" to save her? Or was it, after all, some Casabianca-like folly of remaining at her "post" until the end? Whatever the reason, she stayed.

Day after day she waited for the warning's fulfilment. Though waiting, she worked on. "'Twas very exciting," she told a friend long afterward. "I would be walking down the Avenue with one of the officials, military or state, and as we strolled along there would pass—perhaps a washerwoman carrying home her basket of clean clothes, or, maybe, a gaily attired youth from lower Seventh Avenue; but something in the way the woman held her basket, or in the way the youth twirled his cane, told me that news had been received, or that news was

wanted—that I must open up communications in some way. Or as we sat in some city park a sedate old gentleman would pass by: to my unsuspecting escort the passer-by was but commonplace, but to me his manner of polishing his glasses, or the flourish of the handkerchief with which he rubbed his nose, was a message."

Days full of anxious forebodings sped by until the morning of the 23d of August dawned, oppressively sultry after the night of rain which had so bedraggled Allan Pinkerton and his detective. At about eleven o'clock that morning Mrs. Greenhow was returning home from a promenade with a distinguished member of the diplomatic corps, but for whose escort she believed she would have been arrested sooner, for she knew she was being followed. Excusing herself to her escort, she stopped to inquire for the sick child of a neighbor, and there they warned her that her house was being watched. So, then, the time had come! As she paused at her neighbor's door, perhaps for the moment a trifle irresolute, one of her "humble agents" chanced to be coming that way; farther down the street two men were watching her; she knew their mission.

LITTLE ROSE GREENHOW
From a War-time Photograph

To her passing agent she called, softly: "I think that I am about to be arrested. Watch from Corcoran's corner. I shall raise my handkerchief to my face if they arrest me. Give information of it." Then she slowly crossed the street to her house. She had several important papers with her that morning; one, a tiny note, she put into her mouth and destroyed; the other, a letter in cipher, she was unable to get from her pocket without being observed; for the opportunity to destroy it she must trust to chance. As she mounted the short flight of steps to her door, the two men—Allan Pinkerton and his operative, who had followed her rapidly—reached the foot of the steps. She turned and faced them, waiting for them to speak.

"Is this Mrs. Greenhow?"

"Yes," she replied, coldly. As they still hesitated, she asked, "Who are you, and what do you want?"

"I have come to arrest you," Pinkerton answered, shortly.

"By what authority? Let me see your warrant," she demanded, bravely enough except for what seemed a nervous movement of the fluttering handkerchief. To the detectives, if they noticed it, it was but the tremulous gesture of a woman's fright. To the agent lingering at Corcoran's corner it was the signal.

"I have no power to resist you," she said; "but, had I been inside of my house I would have killed one of you before I had submitted to this illegal process." They followed her into her house and closed the door.

"It seemed but a moment," she tells, "before the house became filled with men, and an indiscriminate search commenced. Men rushed with frantic haste into my chamber, into every sanctuary. Beds, drawers, wardrobes, soiled linen—search was made everywhere! Even scraps of paper — childrens' unlettered scribblings — were seized and tortured into dangerous correspondence with the enemy."

It was a very hot day. She asked to be allowed to change her dress, and permission was grudgingly given her, but almost immediately a detective followed

THE OLD CAPITOL PRISON

to her bedroom, calling, "Madam! Madam!" and flung open the door. She barely had had time to destroy the cipher note that was in her pocket. Very shortly afterward a woman detective arrived, and "I was allowed the poor privilege of unfastening my own garments, which one by one were received by this pseudo-woman and carefully examined."

Though wild confusion existed within the house, no sign of it was allowed to show itself from without, for the house was now a trap, baited and set; behind the doors detectives waited to seize all who, ignorant of the fate of its owner, might call. Anxious to save her friends, and fearful, too, lest she be compromised further by papers which might be found on them when searched, Mrs. Greenhow sought means to warn them away. The frightened servants were all under guard, but there was one member of the household whose freedom was not yet taken from her—Mrs. Greenhow's daughter, Rose, a child of eight. It is her letters which have supplied many of the details for this story. Of that day, so full of terror and bewilderment, the memory which stands out most clear to her is that of climbing a tree in the garden and from there calling to all the passers-by: "Mother has been arrested! Mother has been arrested!" until the detectives in the house heard her, and angrily dragged her, weeping, from the tree.

But in spite of the efforts of the "humble agent" who had waited at Corcoran's corner for the handkerchief signal, in spite of the sacrifice of little Rose's freedom, the trap that day was sprung many times. Miss Maekall and her sister, close friends of Mrs. Greenhow, were seized as they crossed the threshold, and searched and detained. Their mother, coming to find her daughters, became with them a prisoner. A negro girl—a former servant—and her brother, who were merely passing the house, were induced to enter it, and for hours subjected to an inquisition.

Night came, and the men left in charge grew boisterous; an argument started among them. Mrs. Greenhow tells—with keen enjoyment—of having egged on the disputants, pitting nationality against nationality—English, Ger-

man, Irish, Yankee—so that in the still night their loud, angry voices might serve as a danger signal to her friends. But the dispute died out at last—too soon to save two gentlemen who called late that evening, a call which cost them months of imprisonment on the never-proved charge of being engaged in "contraband and treasonable correspondence with the Confederates."

Soon after midnight there came the brief relaxing of vigilance for which Mrs. Greenhow had watched expectantly all day. She had taken the resolution to fire the house if she did not succeed in obtaining certain papers in the course of the night, for she had no hope that they would escape a second day's search. But now the time for making the attempt had come, and she stole noiselessly into the dark library. From the topmost shelf she took down a book, between whose leaves lay the coveted despatch; concealing it in the folds of her dress, she swiftly regained her room. A few moments later the guard returned to his post at her open door.

She had been permitted the companionship of Miss Mackall, and now as the two women reclined on the bed they planned how they might get the despatch out of the house. When Mrs. Greenhow had been searched that afternoon her shoes and stockings had not been examined, and so, trusting to the slim chance that Miss Mackall's would likewise escape examination, it was determined that the despatch should be hidden in her stocking; and this—since the room was in darkness save for the faint light from the open door, and the bed stood in deep shadow—was accomplished in the very presence of the guard. They planned that should Miss Mackall, when about to be released, have reason to believe she was to be searched carefully, she must then be seized with compunction at leaving her friend, and return.

Between three and four o'clock Saturday morning those friends who had been detained were permitted to depart (except the two gentlemen, who, some hours before, had been taken to the Provost-Marshal), and with Miss Mackall went in safety the despatch for whose destruction Mrs. Greenhow would have burned her house.

But though she had destroyed or saved much dangerous correspondence, there fell into the hands of the Federal secret service much more of her correspondence, by which were dragged into the net many of her friends and agents. A letter in cipher addressed to Thomas John Rayford in part read:

> Your three last despatches I never got. Those by Applegate were betrayed by him to the War Department; also the one sent by our other channel was destroyed by Van Camp.

Dr. Aaron Van Camp, charged with being a spy, was arrested, and cast into the Old Capitol Prison. In a stove in the Greenhow house were found, and pieced together, the fragments of a note from Donellan, the messenger who had carried her despatch to Beauregard before Bull Run. The note introduced "Colonel Thompson, the bearer, . . . [who] will be happy to take from your hands any communications and obey your injunctions as to disposition of same with despatch." The arrest of Colonel Thompson, as of Mrs. Greenhow, involved others; it was all like a house of cards—by the arrest of Mrs. Greenhow the whole flimsy structure had been brought crashing down.

Of the days which followed the beginning of Mrs. Greenhow's imprisonment in her own house, few were devoid of excitement of some sort. After a few days Miss Mackall had obtained permission to return and share her friend's captivity. It was she who fortunately found and destroyed a sheet of blotting-paper which bore the perfect imprint of the Bull Run despatch! The detectives remained in charge for seven days; they examined every book in the library leaf by leaf (too late!); boxes containing books, china, and glass that had been packed away for months were likewise minutely examined. Portions of the furniture were taken apart; pictures removed from their frames; beds overturned many times.

"Seemingly I was treated with deference," Mrs. Greenhow tells. "Once only were violent hands put upon my person—the detective, Captain Denis, having rudely seized me to prevent me giving warning to a lady and gentleman on the

first evening of my arrest (which I succeeded in doing)." She was permitted to be alone scarcely a moment. "If I wished to lie down, he was seated a few paces from my bed. If I desired to change my dress, it was obliged to be done with open doors. . . . They still presumed to seat themselves at table with me, with unwashed hands and shirt-sleeves." Only a few months before this the President of the United States had dined frequently at that very table.

Her jailers sought to be bribed to carry messages for her—in order to betray her; their hands were ever outstretched. One set himself the pleasant task of making love to her maid, Lizzie Fitzgerald, a quick-witted Irish girl, who entered keenly into the sport of sentimental walks and treats at Uncle Sam's expense—and, of course, revealed nothing.

On Friday morning, the 30th of August, Mrs. Greenhow was informed that other prisoners were to be brought in, and that her house was to be converted into a prison. A lieutenant and twenty-one men of the Sturgis Rifles (General McClellan's body-guard) were now placed in charge instead of the detective police. The house began to fill with other prisoners—all women. The once quiet and unpretentious residence at 398 Sixteenth Street became known as "Fort Greenhow," and an object of intense interest to the crowds that came to stare at it—which provoked from the New York *Times* the caustic comment:

> Had Madam Greenhow been sent South immediately after her arrest, as we recommended, we should have heard no more of the heroic deeds of Secesh women, which she has made the fashion.

Had the gaping crowds known what the harassed sentries knew, they would have stared with better cause. They sought to catch a glimpse of Mrs. Greenhow because of what she had done; the guards' chief concern was with the Mrs. Greenhow of the present moment. For during the entire time that she was a prisoner in her own house Mrs. Greenhow was in frequent communication with the South. How she accomplished the seemingly impossible will never be fully known.

She tells of information being conveyed to her by her "little bird"; of preparing "those *peculiar, square* despatches to be forwarded to our great and good President at Richmond"; of "tapestry-work in a vocabulary of colors, which, though not a very prolific language, served my purpose"; and she gives, as an example of many such, "a seemingly innocent letter," which seems innocent, indeed, and must forever remain so, since she does not supply the key whereby its hidden meaning may be understood.

Then there is the story of the ball of pink knitting-yarn, a story which, unlike the yarn ball, was never unwound to lay its innermost secrets bare. Now and then the prisoners passed one another when being marched for their period of exercise in the garden or back into the house again; and it was thus that Mrs. Greenhow one day met Mrs. Philips in the hall. Behind each stalked an armed guard; the ladies might not pause even long enough to bid each other good day. But as she passed on into the house, Mrs. Philips called, "I found your ball of pink yarn in the shrub-bush under your window, and tossed it into your room." Pink yarn! Women-talk!—not worth a soldier's heed, and the sentries gave it none. Out in the garden Mrs. Greenhow restlessly paced up and down; for the first time the brief half-hour seemed too long; for the first time, too, she was glad to be marched back to her room again. Yes! there on the floor in a band of sunlight lay the pink ball—safe. As she dropped it carelessly into her work-basket the guard watched her narrowly, then again languidly seated himself at her door. That is all of the story—except that the ball of pink yarn was wound around a little roll of paper, a cipher message from the South.

By such means she was able to outwit her many guards—though not as invariably as at the time she believed that she had done. Allan Pinkerton reports to the War Department, with a mixture of irritation and complacency:

> She has not ceased to lay plans, to attempt the bribery of officers having her in charge, to make use of signs from the windows of her house to her friends on the streets, to communicate with such friends and through them as she supposed send in-

Drawn by Stanley M. Arthurs

THE BARRED WINDOW LOOKED OUT UPON THE PRISON YARD

formation to the rebels in ciphers requiring much time to decipher—all of which she supposed she was doing through an officer who had her in charge and whom she supposed she had bribed to that purpose, but who, faithful to his trust, laid her communications before yourself.

But Mrs. Greenhow evidently made use of other channels as well, for the copy of her first letter to Secretary Seward safely reached the hands of those friends to whom it was addressed, and by them it was published in the newspapers, North and South, thereby showing to all the world that a tendril of the grapevine telegraph still reached out from "Fort Greenhow." It was not this alone which made officialdom and the public gasp—it was the letter itself. In tone it was calm, almost dispassionate—a masterly letter. The blunt Anglo-Saxon words which set forth in detail the indignities which she suffered from the unceasing watch kept over her came like so many blows. She pointed out that her arrest had been without warrant; that her house and all its contents had been seized, and that she herself had been held a prisoner more than three months without a trial, and that she was yet ignorant of the charge against her. The letter was strong, simple, dignified, but it brought no reply.

The heat of midsummer had passed and autumn had come, and with it many changes. Miss Mackall was one day abruptly taken away and sent to her own home; the two friends were never to meet again. Other prisoners were freed or transferred elsewhere, and yet others came—among them a Miss Poole, who almost immediately sought to curry favor by reporting that little Rose, who for some time had been allowed to play, under guard, on the pavement, had received a communication for her mother; and the child was again confined within the four walls. "This was perhaps my hardest trial—to see my little one pining and fading under my eyes for want of food and air. The health and spirits of my faithful maid also began to fail." The attempt of several of the guard to communicate information was likewise reported by Miss Poole, and the thumb-screws of discipline were tightened by many turns. The kindly officer of the guard, Lieutenant Sheldon, was ordered to hold no personal communication with Mrs. Greenhow; the guard was set as spies upon one another and upon him; they, too, were forbidden under severe penalty to speak to her or to answer her questions. An order was issued prohibiting her from purchasing newspapers, or being informed of their contents. At times it seemed as though her house, and she in it, had been swallowed, and now lay within the four walls of a Chillon or a Château d'If; it was added bitterness to her to look about the familiar room and remember that once it had been home!

Miss Mackall had been making ceaseless efforts to be allowed to visit her friend, but permission was steadily denied. Then the news sifted into "Fort Greenhow," and reached its one-time mistress, that Miss Mackall was ill, desperately ill; for the first time Mrs. Greenhow ceased to demand—she pleaded to see her friend; and failed. Then came the news that Miss Mackall was dead.

Among those friends of the old days who now and then were allowed to call was Edwin M. Stanton, not yet Secretary of War. Mrs. Greenhow endeavored to engage him as counsel to obtain for her a writ of *habeas corpus,* but he declined.

Friends—with dubious tact—smuggled to her newspaper clippings in which the statement was made that "Mrs. Greenhow had lost her mind," and that "it is rumored that the government is about to remove her to a private lunatic asylum." "My blood freezes even now," she wrote, "when I recall my feelings at the reception of this communication, and I wonder that I had not gone mad." When the Judge-Advocate, making a friendly, "unofficial" call, asked, "To what terms would you be willing to subscribe for your release?" she replied, with unbroken courage:

"None, sir! I demand my unconditional release, indemnity for losses, and the restoration of my papers and effects."

The day after Christmas Mrs. Greenhow wrote two letters. The one, in cipher, was found in the archives of the Confederate War Department when Richmond was evacuated; it was deciphered and published in the Official Records:

December 26th

In a day or two 1,200 eavalry supported by four batteries of artillery will eross the river above to get behind Manassas and eut off railroad and other eommunications with our army whilst an attaek is made in front. For God's sake heed this. It is positive. . . .

The grape-vine telegraph lines were still clear both into and out of "Fort Greenhow."

The other was a second letter to Secretary Seward—a very different sort of letter from the first, being but a tirade on the ethics of the Southern cause, purposeless, save that "Contempt and defiance alone actuated me. I had known Seward intimately, and he had frequently enjoyed the hospitalities of my table." Unlike its worthy predecessor, this letter was to bear fruit.

On the morning of the 5th of January a search was again commenced throughout the house. The police were searching for the copy of the second letter. But, as in the first instance, the copy had gone out simultaneously with the original. When Mrs. Greenhow was allowed to return to her room she found that the window had been nailed up, and every scrap of paper had been taken from her writing-desk and table.

It was this copy of the second letter to Secretary Seward which sent Mrs. Greenhow to the Old Capitol Prison.

It was published as the first had been, thereby clearly showing that Mrs. Greenhow was still able to communicate with the South almost at will in spite of all efforts to prevent her. It was the last straw. The State Department acted swiftly. On January 18th came the order for Mrs. Greenhow to prepare for immediate removal elsewhere; two hours later she parted from her faithful and weeping maid, and she and the little Rose left their home forever. Between the doorstep and the carriage was a double file of soldiers, between whom she passed; at the carriage — still holding little Rose by the hand—she turned on the soldiers indignantly. "May your next duty be a more honorable one than that of guarding helpless women and children," she said.

Dusk had fallen ere the carriage reached the Old Capitol; here, too, a guard was drawn up under arms to prevent any attempt at rescue. The receiving-room of the prison was crowded with officers and civilians, all peering curiously. Half an hour later she and the child were marched into a room very different from that which they had left in the house in Sixteenth Street. The room, 10x12, was on the second floor of the back building of the prison; its only window (over which special bars were placed next day) looked out upon the prison-yard. A narrow bed, on which was a straw mattress covered by a pair of unwashed cotton sheets, a small feather pillow, dingy and dirty, a few wooden chairs, a table, and a cracked mirror furnished the room which from that night was to be theirs during months of heart-breaking imprisonment.

An understanding of those bitter days can be given best by extracts from her diary:

"*January 25th.*—I have been one week in my new prison. My letters now all go through the detective police, who subject them to a chemical process to extract the treason. In one of the newspaper accounts I am supposed to use sympathetic ink. I purposely left a preparation very conspicuously placed, in order to divert attention from my real means of communication, and they have swallowed the bait and fancy my friends are at their mercy. *January 28th.*—This day as I stood at my barred window the guard rudely called 'Go 'way from that window!' and leveled his musket at me. I maintained my position without condescending to notice him, whereupon he called the corporal of the guard. I called also for the officer of the guard, . . . who informed me that I must not go to the window. I quietly told him that, at whatever peril, I should avail myself of the largest liberty of the four walls of my prison. He told me that his guard would have orders to fire upon me. I had no idea that such monstrous regulations existed. To-day the dinner for myself and child consists of a bowl of beans swimming in grease, two slices of fat junk, and two slices of bread. . . . I was very often intruded upon by large parties of Yankees, who came with passes from the Provost-Marshal to stare at me. Sometimes I was amused, and generally contrived to find out what was going on.

. . . Afterward I requested the superintendent not to allow any more of these parties to have access to me. He told me that numbers daily came to the prison who would gladly give him ten dollars apiece to be allowed to pass my open door. *March 3d.*—Since two days we are actually allowed a half-hour's exercise in the prison-yard, where we walk up and down, picking our way as best we can through mud and negroes, followed by soldiers and corporals, bayonets in hand. . . . Last night I put my candle on the window, in order to get something out of my trunk near which it stood, all unconscious of committing any offense against prison discipline, when the guard below called, 'Put out that light!' I gave no heed, but only lighted another, whereupon several voices took up the cry, adding, 'Damn you, I will fire into your room!' Rose was in a state of great delight, and collected all the ends of candles to add to the illumination. By this the clank of arms and patter of feet, in conjunction with the furious rapping at my door, with a demand to open it, announced the advent of corporal and sergeant. My door was now secured inside by a bolt which had been allowed me. I asked their business. Answer, 'You are making signals, and must remove your lights from the window.' I said, 'But it suits my convenience to keep them there.' 'We will break open your door if you don't open it.' 'You will act as you see fit, but it will be at your peril!' They did not dare to carry out this threat, as they knew that I had a very admirable pistol on my mantelpiece, restored to me a short time since, although they did not know that I had no ammunition for it." The candles burned themselves out, and that ended it, save that next day, by order of the Provost-Marshal, the pistol was taken from the prisoner.

But it was not all a merry baiting of the guards — there was hardship connected with this imprisonment. In spite of the folded clothing placed on the hard bed, the child used to cry out in the night, "Oh, mamma, mamma, the bed hurts me so!" The rooms above were filled with negroes. "The tramping and screaming of negro children overhead was most dreadful." Worse than mere sound came from these other prisoners: there came disease. Smallpox broke out among them, also the lesser disease, camp measles, which latter was contracted by the little Rose. She, too, had her memories of the Old Capitol; in a recent letter she wrote:

"I do not remember very much about our imprisonment except that I used to cry myself to sleep from hunger. . . . There was a tiny closet in our room in which mother contrived to loosen a plank that she would lift up, and the prisoners of war underneath would catch hold of my legs and lower me into their room; they were allowed to receive fruit, etc., from the outside, and generously shared with me, also they would give mother news of the outside world." Thus the days passed until Mrs. Greenhow was summoned to appear, March 25th, before the United States Commissioners for the Trial of State Prisoners.

Of this "trial" the only record available is her own — rather too flippant in tone to be wholly convincing as to its entire sincerity. Her account begins soberly enough: the cold, raw day, the slowly falling snow, the mud through which the carriage labored to the office of the Provost-Marshal in what had been the residence of Senator Guin—"one of the most elegant in the city; . . . my mind instinctively reverted to the gay and brilliant scenes in which I had mingled in that house, and the goodly company who had enjoyed its hospitality." There was a long wait in a fireless anteroom; then she was led before the Commissioners for her trial. "My name was announced, and the Commissioners advanced to receive me with ill-concealed embarrassment. I bowed to them, saying: 'Gentlemen, resume your seats. I recognize the embarrassment of your positions; it was a mistake on the part of your government to have selected gentlemen for this mission. You have, however, shown me but scant courtesy in having kept me waiting your pleasure for nearly an hour in the cold.'" The prisoner took her place at the long table, midway between the two Commissioners, one of whom, General Dix, was a former friend; at smaller tables were several secretaries; if there were any spectators other than the newspaper reporters, she

makes no mention of them. The trial began.

"One of the reporters now said, 'If you please, speak a little louder, madam.' I rose from my seat, and said to General Dix, 'If it is your object to make a spectacle of me, and furnish reports for the newspapers, I shall have the honor to withdraw from this presence.' Hereupon both Commissioners arose and protested that they had no such intention, but that it was necessary to take notes. . . ." The examination then continued "in a strain in no respect different from that of an ordinary conversation held in a drawing-room, and to which I replied sarcastically, . . . and a careless listener would have imagined that the Commission was endeavoring with plausible arguments to defend the government rather than to incriminate me. . . ." The other Commissioner then said, "'General Dix, you are so much better acquainted with Mrs. Greenhow, suppose you continue the examination?' I laughingly said, 'Commence it, for I hold that it has not begun.'" Mrs. Greenhow's account makes no mention of any witnesses either for or against her; the evidence seems to have consisted solely in the papers found in her house. The whole examination—as she records it—may be summed up in the following questions and answers:

"'You are charged with treason.' 'I deny it!' 'You are charged, madam, with having caused a letter which you wrote to the Secretary of State to be published in Richmond.' 'That can hardly be brought forward as one of the causes of my arrest, for I had been some three months a prisoner when that letter was written.' 'You are charged, madam, with holding communication with the enemy in the South.' 'If this were an established fact, you could not be surprised at it; I am a Southern woman.' . . . 'How is it, madam, that you have managed to communicate, in spite of the vigilance exercised over you?' 'That is my secret!'" And that was practically the end, save that the prisoner said she would refuse to take the oath of allegiance if this opportunity to be freed were offered her.

April 3d the superintendent of the Old Capitol read to her a copy of the decree of the Commission: she had been sentenced to be exiled. But the days passed and nothing came of it. Tantalized beyond endurance, she wrote that she was "ready" to go South. General McClellan, she was then told, had objected to her being sent South at this time. (Federal spies—secret-service men, who, under Allan Pinkerton, had arrested Mrs. Greenhow—were on trial for their lives in Richmond; it was feared that, were she sent South, her testimony would be used against them.) "Day glides into day with nothing to mark the flight of time," the diary continues. "The heat is intense, with the sun beating down upon the house-top and in the windows. . . . My child is looking pale and ill. . . . *Saturday, May 31st.*—At two o'clock today [Prison Superintendent] Wood came in with the announcement that I was to start at three o'clock for Baltimore." The end of imprisonment had come as suddenly as its beginning.

Disquieting rumors had been reaching Mrs. Greenhow for some time in regard to removal to Fort Warren. Was this, after all, a mere Yankee trick to get her there quietly? She was about to enter the carriage that was to bear her from the Old Capitol, when, unable longer to bear the suspense, she turned suddenly to the young lieutenant of the escort: "Sir, ere I advance further, I ask you, not as Lincoln's officer, but as a man of honor and a gentleman, are your orders from Baltimore to conduct me to a Northern prison, or to some point in the Confederacy?" "On my honor, madam," he answered, "to conduct you to Fortress Monroe and thence to the Southern Confederacy." Her imprisonment had, indeed, ended. There was yet the Abolition-soldier guard—on the way to the station, on the cars, in Baltimore, on the steamer; there was yet to be signed at Fortress Monroe the parole in which, in consideration of being set at liberty, she pledged her honor not to return north of the Potomac during the war; but from that moment at the carriage-door she felt herself no longer a prisoner.

To the query of the Provost-Marshal at Fortress Monroe she replied that she wished to be sent "to the capital of the Confederacy, wherever that might be." That was still Richmond, he told her, but

Drawn by Stanley M. Arthurs Half-tone plate engraved by C. E. Hart

MRS. GREENHOW AND THE TWO OTHER PASSENGERS DEMANDED TO BE SET ASHORE

it would be in Federal hands before she could reach there. She would take chances on that, was her laughing rejoinder. And so she was set ashore at City Point by a boat from the *Monitor,* and next morning, June 4th, she and little Rose, escorted by Confederate officers, arrived in Richmond. And there, "on the evening of my arrival, our President did me the honor to call on me, and his words of greeting, 'But for you there would have been no battle of Bull Run,' repaid me for all I had endured."

Could the story be told of the succeeding twenty-seven months of Mrs. Greenhow's life, much of the secret history of the Confederacy might be revealed. It is improbable that the story ever will be told. Months of effort to learn details have resulted in but vague glimpses of her, as one sees an ever-receding figure at the turns of a winding road. Her daughter Rose has written: "Whether mother did anything for the Confederacy in Richmond is more than I can tell. I know that we went to Charleston, South Carolina, and that she saw General Beauregard there." Then came weeks of waiting for the sailing of a blockade-runner from Wilmington, North Carolina; quiet, happy weeks they were, perhaps the happiest she had known since the war began. She was taking little Rose to Paris, to place her in the Convent of the Sacred Heart, she told her new-made friends. One morning they found that she and little Rose had gone. A blockade-runner had slipped out during the night and was on its way with them to Bermuda.

Many have definitely asserted that Mrs. Greenhow went to England and France on a secret mission for the Confederacy. No proof of this has ever been found, but the little which has been learned of her sojourn in Europe strongly supports the theory of such a mission there. The ship which bore them to England from Bermuda was an English man-of-war, in which they sailed "at President Davis's especial request." Then there were President Davis's personal letters to Messrs. Mason and Slidell, requesting them that they show to Mrs. Greenhow every attention. In France she was given a private audience with Napoleon III.; in London, presented to England's Queen. A letter written to her by James Spence, financial agent of the Confederates in Liverpool, shows her to have been actively engaged in support of the interests of the South from her arrival in England. But of any secret mission there is not a trace—unless her book, *My Imprisonment, or the First Year of Abolition Rule in Washington,* may thus be considered. The book was brought out in November, 1863, by the well-known English publishing-house of Richard Bentley & Son; immediately it made a profound sensation in London—particularly in the highest society circles, into which Mrs. Greenhow had at once been received. *My Imprisonment* was a brilliant veneer of personal war-time experiences laid alluringly over a solid backing of Confederate States' propaganda. Richmond may or may not have fathered it, but that book in England served the South well.* None who knew Mrs. Greenhow ever forgot her charm; she made friends everywhere—such friends as Thomas Carlyle and Lady Franklin, and a score more whose names are nearly as well known to-day. She was betrothed to a prominent peer.

All in all, this is but scant information to cover a period of more than two years. Only one other fact has been obtained regarding her life abroad, but it is most significant in support of the belief that she was a secret agent for the Confederacy. In August, 1864, Mrs. Greenhow left England suddenly and sailed for Wilmington on the ship *Condor.* Though her plans were to return almost at once, marry, and remain in England, the fact that she left in London her affianced husband, and her little Rose in the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Paris, while she herself risked her life to run the blockade, seems strong evidence that her business in the Confederate States of America was important business, indeed. The *Condor* was a three-funneled steamer, newly built, and on her first trip as a blockade-runner—a trade for which she was superbly adapted, being swift as a sea-swallow. She was commanded by a veteran captain of the Crimean War—an

* Many of the passages in this article have been quoted from Mrs. Greenhow's own narrative.

English officer on a year's leave, blockade-running for adventure — Captain Augustus Charles Hobart-Hampden, variously known to the blockade-running fleet as Captain Roberts, Hewett, or Gulick.

On the night of September 30th the *Condor* arrived opposite the mouth of the Cape Fear River, the entry for Wilmington, and in the darkness stole swiftly through the blockade. She was almost in the mouth of the river, and not two hundred yards from shore, when suddenly there loomed up in the darkness a vessel dead ahead. To the frightened pilot of the *Condor* it was one of the Federal squadron; he swerved his ship sharply, and she drove hard on New Inlet bar. In reality the ship which had caused the damage was the wreck of the blockade-runner *Nighthawk,* which had been run down the previous night. The *Condor's* pilot sprang overboard and swam ashore. Dawn was near breaking, and in the now growing light the Federal blockaders which had followed the *Condor* were seen to be closing in. Though the *Condor,* lying almost under the very guns of Fort Fisher—which had begun firing at the Federal ships and was holding them off—was for the time being safe, yet Mrs. Greenhow and the two other passengers, Judge Holcombe and Lieutenant Wilson, Confederate agents, demanded that they be set ashore. There was little wind and there had been no storm, but the tide-rip ran high over the bar, and the boat was lowered into heavy surf. Scarcely was it clear of the tackles ere a great wave caught it, and in an instant it was overturned. Mrs. Greenhow, weighted down by her heavy black silk dress and a bag full of gold sovereigns, which she had fastened round her waist, sank at once and did not rise again. The others succeeded in getting ashore.

The body of Mrs. Greenhow was washed up on the beach next day. They buried her in Wilmington—buried her with the honors of war, and a Confederate flag wrapped about her coffin. And every Memorial Day since then there is laid upon her grave a wreath of laurel leaves such as is placed only upon the graves of soldiers. Long ago the Ladies' Memorial Society placed there a simple marble cross, on which is carved: "Mrs. Rose O'Neal Greenhow. A Bearer of Despatches to the Confederate Government."

When I am Gone

BY RICHARD LE GALLIENNE

WHEN I am gone,
Over the silent sky
The birds will fly;
Ah! how the birds will sing—
When I am gone;
And the blue eye
Of some unborn and beautiful young thing
Will watch them fly,
And her young heart will break to hear them sing—
When I am gone.

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